

# The Perception Management Process

Lieutenant Colonel Craig S. Jones, US Army, Retired

**S**INCE US ARMY Field Manual (FM) 100-6, *Information Operations*, has been published, much has been written and said about information operations (IO). Despite IO becoming part of the Army lexicon, much confusion remains concerning IO and its broad range of diverse disciplines and activities. Using information systems (INFOSYS), protecting INFOSYS and conducting deception all run the IO gamut. This article focuses on one aspect of IO—methodology—and will offer prospective IO staff officers a template for planning, implementing and evaluating IO's perception management piece. Hopefully, this article will also be used by those individuals who work with IO staff officers, so they can better understand their role.

This article's foundation is based on personal observations of Task Force (TF) *Eagle*'s IO cell in Bosnia during December 1997 and the work done by Lieutenant Colonels Garry Beavers and Stephen Shanahan of the Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA).<sup>1</sup>

*Perception management* involves all actions that “convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives and objective reasoning; and to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives. In various ways, perception management combines truth projection, operations security [OPSEC] cover and deception, and psychological operations [PSYOP].”<sup>2</sup>

In the following scenarios, Joint Task Force (JTF) *Falcon* has the mission to conduct peace operations in the former Soviet Republic of Ublestan. The JTF's IO staff officer, augmented with a team from the Joint Command and Control Warfare Center, has developed an IO campaign plan to support the commander in chief's (CINC's) campaign plan. To ex-

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ecute the IO campaign plan's objectives, a series of IO programs must be developed by the subordinate land component command (LCC). The LCC commander wants an IO plan that will support the JTF's IO campaign plan and assist him in accomplishing his mission to protect lives and property in case of riots in the multiethnic city of Tajmil. Municipal elections will be held in 90 days, and it seems likely that the losing political party will instigate riots after the election results are announced. The 60th Armor Division (AD) forming the LCC for JTF *Falcon* is combat ready and has enough firepower to quell any riot. However, the commander would prefer to avoid using lethal force. Thus, he wants his IO staff officer to develop and execute an IO plan that will assist his diplomatic efforts in preventing the citizens in and around Tajmil from rioting.

## IO Organization

The 60th AD's IO cell consists of the division's IO officer and a three-man field support team (FST) from the LIWA. The FST provides expertise in deception and OPSEC, and it has tools for IO modeling, targeting and synchronization. Because the IO cell is small and does not possess the skills of a more ro-

bust command and control warfare (C<sup>2</sup>W) element, its plans and execution strategy will be small-scale. For the division to execute a greater IO capability and achieve full integration and synchronization, the IO officer uses the Information Operations Working Group (IOWG). The IOWG's composition is mission contingent. In this scenario, it comprises representatives from the IO cell, G3 Plans, G2 Plans, Public Affairs (PA), Civil Affairs (CA), G6, PSYOP, Electronic Warfare (EW), Staff Judge Advocate, Political Adviser (POLAD), Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE), Provost Marshal Office (PMO) and Counterintelligence. As facilitator, the IO officer ensures that the talents and creativity of the individual IOWG members are fully employed in achieving IO objectives. The following process provides a template for conducting IO.

### IO Process

The IO process discussed herein is a 12-step method that forms a template for planning, implementing and evaluating IO. Although it is not doctrine, and it differs slightly from the one being used by the LIWA in Bosnia, it is offered here as a point of reference. I hope this article will evoke further discussion and improvements in IO modeling and measures of effectiveness (MOE), which are currently two major shortfalls in executing IO. In fact, Joint Publication (Pub) 3-58, *Joint Doctrine for Military Deception*, says deception planning is also true for the IO Process—"Although diagrams of planning processes are useful in aiding the understanding of the relationship of the individual elements of the process, it must be remembered that processes are seldom as linear as diagrams or flow charts may imply. Deception planners must be prepared to respond to the dynamics of the situation and of their own headquarters."<sup>3</sup> The IO cell and IOWG must follow a 12-step method to achieve effective IO:

**Analyze the mission.** The IO cell analyzes the mission to determine the military and political objectives and commander's intent. The IO cell then collects all available relevant information and intelligence (RII) and begins to formulate questions that need answering. The G2 develops an IO intelligence preparation of the battlefield, and the IO officer then presents the IO cell's work to the IOWG. The other IOWG members will have analyzed the mission to determine how they can best attain the commander's objectives. Following the IOWG meetings, team members go back to their individual work sites to plan and manage their activities. It is

through the IOWG that the IO officer gains synergy by ensuring that IO is fully coordinated and synchronized. For the rest of the IO process, the reader can assume that the steps are carried out by the IOWG functioning as a team.

**Seek RII.** The key to effective IO is RII, which is needed to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate

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IO. The G2 representative is the IO officer's link to RII. The IOWG develops requests for intelligence (RFI), which the G2 cell works. The G2 representative ensures RFIs are properly submitted, monitored and answered, to provide necessary feedback to the IOWG. While the G2 processes the request, other members are gathering their own "answers" and sources to collect RII. PSYOP, CA, counterintelligence and SOCCE teams in the field will be collecting RII. Meanwhile, the IO cell aggressively exploits the unclassified Internet and various military nets. Likewise, the POLAD will use all available diplomatic sources. The PA officer will provide the IOWG with information on the media environment surrounding friendly forces. Maintenance contact teams, logistic teams, engineers, reconnaissance elements and infantry and Military Police patrols are exploited for RII. The bottom line is that the myriad sources are fully used and RII is shared within the IOWG.

**Determine IO objectives.** An IO objective is a specific, operational statement of desired IO program accomplishments. For each IO objective, the planner strives to use strong verbs, states only one purpose, specifies a single end state and specifies the expected time for achievement.<sup>4</sup> It is important to remember that the closer the objectives are to directly measurable outcomes, the more likely it is that a competent evaluation will result. Using our scenario, the IO cell determines the following: "Within 90 days, dissuade the populace of Tajmil from rioting."

*Dissuade* is the strong verb. The IOWG has one aim—dissuading the populace from rioting. Thus, the specified outcome is no rioting, an outcome that can be easily measured. This IO objective becomes

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the overarching objective for all IOWG members. Then they must develop C<sup>2</sup>W, PA and CA objectives for their respective elements.

**Determine objectives for each element.** The IO staff officer needs to know what the C<sup>2</sup>W, PA and CA objectives are and how they will aid in achieving the overarching IO objectives. Although members will come to the IOWG with objectives already in mind, it is important to go through a brainstorming process. Brainstorming fosters team ownership of the objectives, provides a sanity check and allows members to know one another's intent, thereby promoting synergy. Brainstorming ensures that the IO objectives and each element's objectives are clear, distinct and focused. More importantly, it forges a strong link allowing members to better understand the connectivity between the elements' objectives and the overarching IO objective.

In our scenario, one PSYOP objective might be to "inform the target audience of the ramifications of any rioting." If ramifications include a military response, it is imperative that the military and diplomatic agencies are capable and have the resolve to follow through with military action. This example illustrates why PSYOP themes must be approved by higher headquarters. The objectives and themes for PSYOP, deception and other C<sup>2</sup>W pillars will be rolled into the IO program, which should support the CINC's IO campaign plan. One might argue that inform is not a strong verb, compared with *dissuade*, but to simply "inform" is a necessary step toward achieving the IO objective. It can also be easily measured.

The military deception objective might be to "convince the target audience that certain areas will be heavily patrolled and monitored by ground and air assets." In reality, the friendly assets may not be available to conduct the operations as described. Likewise, EW might have the objective to "degrade and disrupt the capability of faction leaders to communicate electronically during a certain period of time." The "blackout" might be triggered by some event that indicates rioting is imminent. We must remember that these objectives must help achieve the IO objective. Achieving an individual element's objective and not the IO objective is a failure for the IOWG.

**Identify IO targets.** The IO cell identifies IO targets, consistent with the commander's intent, and presents this list to the IOWG for review. IOWG members will recommend additional targets to the IO cell. Targets will be quite diversified and could include key communicators, a certain population segment or a set of radio towers that are being used to encourage people to riot. The probability of success is increased if a target can be attacked by more than one C<sup>2</sup>W pillar. Therefore, all IOWG members should obtain detailed information about the target audience.

**Obtain detailed information about the target audience.** As a minimum, RII about the target audience should consist of the following:

- Political agendas.
- Biographic information on key political and military figures.
- Decision-making process.
- Demographic information: age, sex, race, religion, economic income, cultural likes and dislikes.
- The target audience's perceptions of friendly capabilities and possible courses of action (COAs).
- The target audience's IO capabilities and processes.
- Estimates of the target audience's actions under differing scenarios.

One area needing improvement is IO modeling and simulation. The difficulty of quantifying results produced by IO activities has caused IO modeling to lag behind more conventional force-on-force modeling. However, such modeling tools as the Advanced Regional Exploratory System, Deployable Exercise Support System and *SPECTRUM* show promise. As these and other tools are developed, modeling will help the IO staff officer evaluate various COAs and objectives and estimated the target audience's actions under different scenarios. PSYOP personnel are trained in target audience

Supporters of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide march through the streets of Cap Haitien during Operation Uphold Democracy.

US Army



***PSYOP personnel have skills, expertise and experience in developing themes. But again, as with objectives, themes should first be discussed within the IOWG for possible improvement and to ensure that all members are thoroughly familiar with them. . . . Providing the right piece of information to the right audience to reinforce or create perceptions or to cause ambiguity is the goal. However, thinking in terms of themes allows the IOWG to develop, identify and create the “right piece” of information.***

analysis—the process by which potential target audiences are identified and analyzed for effectiveness, accessibility and susceptibility. This type of analysis prepares the IOWG for the next step—developing themes.

**Develop friendly information themes.** FM 33-1, *Psychological Operations*, defines a theme as a subject, topic or line of persuasion used to achieve a psychological objective.<sup>5</sup> Themes to use and avoid will often be passed down from higher headquarters. However, themes could also be developed at the LCC level. PSYOP personnel have skills, expertise and experience in developing themes. But again, as with objectives, themes should first be discussed within the IOWG for possible improvement and to ensure that all members are thoroughly familiar with them. In our scenario, possible themes are:

- “Peaceful protest is the appropriate way to communicate your desire for political change.”
- “Violence will be met with force in order to protect lives and property.”
- “Rioting will delay, and possibly stop, the re-

building of roads and homes and the inflow of economic aid.”

It is important to remember that the themes are not necessarily “PSYOP” themes. Providing the right piece of information to the right audience to reinforce or create perceptions or to cause ambiguity is the goal. However, thinking in terms of themes allows the IOWG to develop, identify and create the “right piece” of information.

**Identify pressure points.** A *pressure point* is an important, essential or primary factor that can be influenced to control behavior. As with objectives and themes, the IO officer should facilitate an IOWG discussion to identify pressure points and the best ways to exploit them. In our scenario, the people of Tajmil desperately need economic aid. Therefore, *aid* is a pressure point. It will be made clear to Tajmil’s citizens that the delivery of aid will depend on whether or not the political leaders support democracy.

**Develop Measures of Effectiveness (MOE).** In my opinion, developing IO MOE is the most

difficult step in the IO process. Without MOE, the IOWG will not be able to evaluate IO program effectiveness. A commander has the right and the responsibility to ask his IO staff officer this simple

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question: "How do we know this IO stuff is helping me achieve my overall objectives?"

Thus, the IOWG must build MOE into the IO plan so that the following three critical factors can be measured:

- Effectiveness—the relationship between outputs and objectives. Were the IO objectives achieved? If not, why not?
- Efficiency—the relationship between inputs and outputs. Although the IO program might have been effective, could there have been better ways to do it quicker and cheaper?
- Adaptability—the IOWG's ability to respond to changing demands. Was there sufficient flexibility to adjust a PSYOP program or deception plan to react to an unexpected event?

MOE can be classified as either quantitative or qualitative. In *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, Michael Patton states, "Quantitative methodology assumes the necessity, desirability and even the possibility of applying some underlying empirical standard to social phenomena. By way of contrast, qualitative methodology assumes that some phenomena are not amenable to numerical mediation."<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, *quantitative research* is desirable when:

- A picture of the environment at a given point in time is needed.
- Data that can be projected to a larger universe is needed.
- The target audience is difficult to reach.
- Large amounts of specific information from the target audience is sought.

- The data must be statistically representative of a very large geographic area.

On the other hand, *qualitative research* is desirable when:

- Modifications need to be made to an idea before it is finalized.
- Rapid feedback from the targeted audience is needed.
- The research budget is limited.
- There is a need to probe deeply into the cause of some observed behavior.<sup>7</sup>

The point here is that different assessments require different MOE. The IOWG should not get locked into thinking that if MOE are not quantifiable they are of no use.

**Write the IO plan.** With the information obtained so far, the IO cell is now ready to write the IO plan. The written document might be formatted as an IO annex to a concept plan or operations plan. In addition, the IO cell uses a series of worksheets, matrices and Gantt charts to record and display objectives, pressure points, tasks, milestones and timelines.<sup>8</sup>

**Implement and monitor IO campaign plan.** During this step the plan is actually executed. The plan is monitored and feedback begins while RII collection continues. A synchronization matrix is used to deconflict and synchronize IO activity. The IOWG members continuously use RII, MOE and other feedback to evaluate their individual activity's effectiveness and fine-tune the plan and adjust to unexpected events. Focus is on coordinating, adapting and achieving synergy.

Because IO are mutually supporting, the following components can support PSYOP deception planning and theme production:

- Creating perceptions that will enhance the deception plan's believability.
  - Providing RII to IOWG.
  - Informing the populace about the benefits being provided by CA.
  - Loud speaker teams helping control the populace during aid distribution.
  - Explaining to the populace why certain groups are not receiving their perceived "fair share" of aid.
  - Conducting counterpropaganda activities and protecting against misinformation and disinformation.
  - Producing articles by key communicators that encourage respect for democracy and rule of law.
- In turn, deception can support operations by:
- Disseminating information that reinforces PSYOP themes.

- Creating perceptions that enhance susceptibility to PSYOP themes.
- Reinforcing CA themes in the content of deception information.
- Creating perceptions that support PA desired perceptions.

Likewise, CA supports PSYOP by:

- Providing aid to the host nation (HN), which gives substance to PSYOP themes.
- Providing RII.
- Providing RII to IOWG.
- Disseminating truthful information that reinforces the deception plan's believability.
- Providing events that PA can exploit to show the command in a positive light.

In concert with these other efforts, PA can support ongoing themes and plans by:

- Providing information that counters adversary's propaganda.
- Providing interviews with commanders who articulate JTF's reaction to rioting.
- Producing stories that show the unit is combat ready and prepared to respond to riots.
- Publicizing financial and humanitarian aid given to HN.
- Providing information on how populace is to receive aid, where and when, with specific times and locations.

Let me state emphatically that PA and CA do not conduct PSYOP or deception, nor are these IO components manipulated by the PSYOP and deception planners. However, they and the C<sup>2</sup>W elements, by staying in their own lanes and providing information that create the desired perceptions, can achieve synergy and increase the probability of achieving the IO objectives.

**Evaluate the IO program.** As stated earlier, MOE are built into the plan to provide the IOWG

with an azimuth check, enabling IO planners to adapt their plans as necessary. MOE are also used to evaluate the overall IO program's effectiveness.

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Knowing the effectiveness, the IOWG can decide whether to continue, modify or end it.

Developing and implementing IO MOE must be an IOWG team effort. The PSYOP element's pre-testing and post-testing of a product or evaluation of a PSYOP program needs to be shared with the IOWG. Other members could possibly use the feedback to evaluate their own efforts, and this information is needed by the IO staff officer so he can evaluate the overall IO program. Also, resources can be saved if one evaluation could answer other IOWG members' questions.

The challenges facing the IO staff officer are formidable. Getting the IOWG to function as a team, obtaining RII and measuring IO effectiveness are just a few of the hurdles he must overcome. He needs additional tools to monitor and evaluate IO on a par with his civilian counterparts in marketing and political campaigning. Work continues apace to provide the IO staff officer with a much-needed, doctrinal-based methodology to plan and implement future IO. **MR**

## NOTES

1. LTC (Ret) Stephen W. Shanahan and LTC Garry Beavers, US Army, "Operationalizing IO in Bosnia-Herzegovina," Land Information Warfare Activity, Fort Belvoir, VA.
2. Joint Publication (Pub) 1-02, *Department of Defense Directory of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], March 1994), 315.
3. Joint Pub 3-58, *Joint Doctrine for Military Deception* (Washington, DC: GPO, May 1996), IV-1.
4. Peter H. Rossi and Howard E. Freeman, *Evaluation* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications 1982), 59.
5. US Army Field Manual (FM) FM 33-1, *Psychological Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 18 February 1993), Glossary-12.
6. Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978), 212.

7. Thomas L. Greenbaum, *The Handbook for Focus Group Research* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993), 30.
8. Shanahan and Beavers used the following worksheets and matrices in their work in Bosnia: **Pressure Point Identification Worksheet** (PPIW). The PPIW provides the IO planner with a systematic way to identify ways to influence target audiences. **IO Planning Worksheet** (PW). The IO planner uses the PW to determine how and when to influence each pressure point. **Synchronization Matrix** (SM). The SM is used to deconflict and synchronize IO activity. **IO Implementation Worksheet** (IW). The IW is used to record additional information about each IO event found on the SM. In addition to identifying the attack "subsystem," the worksheet identifies the specific information themes that will be used for each IO audience. **IO Implementation Matrix** (IM). The IM chronologically lists all IO executions for each IO function. Information from the IM is carried forward to the optional IO implementation graphic (IG). **IO IG**. The IG graphically portrays scheduled IO activity during a specific time period.

*Lieutenant Colonel Craig S. Jones, US Army, Retired, is a senior analyst with GCR International, based in northern Virginia. He received a B.S. from Old Dominion University and an M.P.A. from the University of Oklahoma. He is a graduate of US Army Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. While on active duty, he served as chief, operations branch, Operations Division, Task Force Eagle; chief, C<sup>2</sup>W Branch, Department of the Army; and training officer for the Drug Enforcement Administration.*